

The Explosive Situation in Latin America

By William Z. Foster

AMONG THE MOST important expressions of the revolutionary situation following World War II is the accentuation, in many parts of the world, of the national liberation movements of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples. In the Far East this great movement, with revolutionary People's China as its center, is fast wrecking the colonial systems of Great Britain, France, Holland, and the United States, in India, Pakistan, Indo-China, Korea, Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In the Near and Middle East the colonial and semi-colonial peoples in Egypt, Iran, Libya, etc.—all the way from Afghanistan to Morocco—are on the march against their imperialist exploiters. The same is also true, in an ascending degree, of the Negro people of Central and Southern Africa, who are striving to overthrow the domination of the white imperialists. And closer to home, the colonial and semi-colonial peoples of Latin America are also beginning to stir, indicating that they, too, are feeling and responding to the world-wide national-colonial revolutionary movement.

Conditions are fast ripening in Latin America for a revolutionary, anti-imperialist upheaval. John Foster Dulles is not basically wrong when he fears Latin America soon going the way of Asia. Hunger, disease, illiteracy, and boundless poverty prevail on a profound mass scale among the 160 millions of people throughout the immense areas constituting Latin America—all the way South from the Rio Grande to Cape Horn. Economic conditions, always bad for the great masses of the people, are now steadily worsening. Inflationary conditions prevail in most of the countries. Foreign trade, vital for the peoples, with their heavy surplus of export commodities, is declining. They are getting lower prices for what they sell to their main customer, the United States, and are paying higher prices for the machinery and other goods that they have to buy. With few exceptions, the countries are autocratically ruled by a combination of big landowners in alliance with United States imperialism, and more than half of them, especially, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Costa Rica, El

Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Venezuela, Peru, and Colombia, are dominated by ultra-reactionary dictatorships.

YANKEE IMPERIALISM

The United States is the main architect of the imperialist super-exploitation of the Latin-American peoples. It has largely vanquished its erstwhile powerful imperialist rivals in this vast area. The imperialist grip of Germany, Japan, Italy, and France, once strong, is now very weak and limited; and Great Britain, which once aggressively challenged the United States from Mexico to Argentina, is being steadily reduced to a defensive role, and in but a few countries—especially Brazil and Argentina. The United States, with investments there of six billion dollars, is out to solidify its control over all of Latin America. It maintains its imperial power by active collaboration with the most reactionary dictators in Latin America. Indeed, most of them are its puppets. The general rule is, with few exceptions, that the more reactionary a government is in Latin America the more closely it is affiliated to, that is, dominated by, the United States.

The State Department has made full use of the "cold war" as a pretext for intensifying its repressive, imperialist activities in Latin America. On this basis it has slashed the prices of Latin-American export goods and raised those of imports. It has redoubled its efforts to set up

a direct military control of the countries through the so-called mutual military assistance pacts. It has rammed through such pacts in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Ecuador and Uruguay. In the 1952-53 fiscal year \$51,685,750 was allotted by the United States as "military aid" to Latin-American countries.

Yet the widespread popular opposition to these policies is indicated by the fact that it took the State Department over a year to browbeat the Brazilian Congress into ratifying the military pact signed by its government; in Uruguay it took a year to get the pact ratified; in Ecuador and Chile the governments that signed the pacts were later beaten in national elections, and that in Cuba, also a pact signer, was overthrown in a reactionary coup by Batista, who demagogically exploited anti-Yankee sentiment.

During the period since the end of World War II the United States has been behind every major reactionary movement in Latin America. It is everywhere tied in locally with the big landowners, the pro-imperialist sections of the bourgeoisie, and other reactionaries. It was the State Department that brought about the split, several years ago, in the Latin-American Confederation of Labor, with the direct assistance of the heads of the A. F. of L. and C.I.O. The F.B.I. also has organized a big spy system in many Latin-American countries, especially in the Caribbean area and in Mexico. Its agents

are snooping around everywhere and it is arrogantly trying to terrorize these peoples with McCarthyite systems of thought control and intimidation. F.B.I. agents were responsible for the kidnapping of Gus Hall across the line from Mexico into the United States, in violation of the Constitution of Mexico.

The State Department has also had a hand in the several putsches and fake elections that have taken place in recent years in Latin America—the latest examples, within the past two years, being the violent overthrow of the government in Cuba in March, 1952, and the placing of Batista in power, the wholesale steal of the Mexican election last year by the conservative forces, and the election steal and reactionary coup in Venezuela. The United States is also basically responsible for the reign of terror that has existed in most of Latin America since the end of the world war—with the assassination of many workers' leaders and the jailing of hundreds of others. The struggle for civil liberties in the United States is bound up with that in Latin America; it is a joint struggle against the same reactionary forces.

In Puerto Rico, which for over half a century has been an outright colony of the United States, there exists a most outrageous exploitation of the people and a widespread pauperization comparable only to that found in Asia. There has long been a strong liberation movement in the island demanding national independence, in which the Communist

Party plays an important role. The United States, which poses all over the world as the friend of colonial liberation, has steadily refused to grant independence to its own colony, Puerto Rico. Its latest step to keep the island people in chains was the promulgation of its so-called new constitution of last year, under which the United States maintains its military bases in the island, enforces the Taft-Hartley, Smith, and other reactionary laws, and reserves the right to veto any legislation adopted by the legislature of Puerto Rico—in short Puerto Rico remains a United States colony.

THE GROWING RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

During the past couple of years there has been a growing renaissance of the anti-imperialist, national-liberation movement in many Latin-American countries. This is primarily directed against the leading imperialist aggressor, the United States. The slogan, "Yankee, Go Home," is as popular throughout Latin America as it is in Europe, Asia, and other parts of the world. In Brazil, a year ago, Secretary Acheson found this out to his embarrassment, with the police trying in vain to eliminate the countless anti-Yankee slogans which decorated the walls of building all over Rio de Janeiro. And at present writing, Milton Eisenhower, special envoy from the United States to Latin America, is receiving anything but an enthusiastic greeting.

A clear indication of the anti-Yankee imperialist sentiment now rapidly rising in Latin America is the beginning of a changed attitude on the part of the Latin-American delegations in the United Nations. For the first three or four years of the existence of that organization, these delegations, with the partial exception of Argentina, voted virtually as a bloc in support of nearly everything proposed by the United States, regardless of its merits. The State Department arrogantly acted as though it had the whole Latin-American vote in its pocket at all times, and with it a sure control of the United Nations. But recently the situation is radically changing. *Latin-American Facts*, in its issue of January-February 1953, says that in the U.N. Seventh Assembly, "Out of a total of 460 possible votes (on 23 tallies), 218, or almost one-half, were withheld by Latin-American countries from the U.S. side. As a result, the U.S. government lost on a number of issues which it might, in previous Assemblies, have won." And it adds that, at a meeting of the Economic and Financial Committee, in a vote on a proposal, submitted by Uruguay and Bolivia, asserting the right of underdeveloped countries to nationalize their resources, the United States, in voting against this important proposition, found itself in a minority of one.

The rising spirit of national liberation in Latin America has been dramatically illustrated by the stirring events in Guatemala and Bolivia. In Guatemala, right in the pri-

ivate Central American preserve of Yankee imperialism, the people, in a broad progressive coalition movement which included the Workers (Communist) Party, won a sweeping election victory in January, 1953, against a combination of big landlords and Yankee industrialists. This increased the coalition strength to 50 votes against 8 for the reactionaries in the national legislature. And now the government is going ahead with the radical agrarian reform launched in June, 1952, with other progressive legislation—to the dismay of Wall Street and to the inspiration of anti-imperialist forces everywhere throughout Latin America. In Bolivia, in April, 1952, the people delivered another smashing blow to reaction through an uprising that placed in power the progressive Paz Estenssoro government, which had been elected the previous year but prevented from taking office by a Right-wing coup. Then the government, in response to the demands of the masses, proceeded to nationalize the great tin mines, owned mostly by United States capital—all of which gave Wall Street something of a heart attack.

In Brazil a militant national movement, in which the Communists are a vital factor, has prevented the imperialists from grabbing the rich oil deposits in that country. Stated Luis Carlos Prestes, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Brazil, in a report to a recent meeting of the party's National Committee: "During the national campaign for a Pact of Peace more than

5,000,000 signatures were collected—the campaign rallied the millions of Brazilians longing for peace. So far we have succeeded in preventing the Vargas government from sending Brazilian troops to Korea, as demanded by its American masters.”

Further South, too, the semi-fascist Peron of Argentina, sensing the way the anti-Yankee wind is blowing, is working diligently (with covert British help) to weaken the United States influence in the lower half of South America.

The United States ultimatum to the Latin-American countries to send troops to be butchered in Korea has been almost completely ignored. This, too, is a sign of growing resistance to Wall Street. Save for Puerto Rico, where, as a colony, the United States simply drafted soldiers, only the fascist government of Colombia in the whole broad expanse of Latin America sent a token contingent of 1,000. One of the surest ways for a politician in Latin America to court political oblivion is to advocate the sending of troops to Korea to serve as blood sacrifices on the altar of warlike Yankee imperialism.

One of the major policies of the United States, in its drive for world mastery through a world war is to develop an economic boycott against the U.S.S.R., People's China, and the European People's Democracies. To enforce this blockade, the State Department has not hesitated to bring the sharpest pressure against its own allies, especially Great Britain. Latin America has not escaped such coer-

cion. But that Latin Americans resent this dictation and are inclined to rebel against it is indicated by their tendencies to increase their trade with the banned countries. Here Argentina has boldly taken the lead, conferring with the U.S.S.R., and sending a trade delegation to People's China. Its exports to the bloc of supposed-to-be boycotted countries have gone up from \$22,448,000 in 1947 to \$47,948,000 in 1950. Brazil has also made trade pacts with Poland and Czechoslovakia; Uruguay is trading with Hungary and Czechoslovakia; and Chile signed a trade pact with People's China in October, 1952. The total Latin-American imports from the Socialist world went up from \$29,589,000 in 1947 to \$57,240,000 in 1951, with exports running at about double this figure. All of which trade developments sit very ill indeed with the militant Yankee imperialists who are insolently attempting to tell the Latin-American nations, as they are other peoples, just whom they shall and shall not trade with.

The most significant of the many indications of the rising anti-imperialist spirit now developing in Latin America, however, is the greatly increased activities of the workers' and the trade-union movements in the various countries. This is tied in with the struggle against the big agrarians who, along with United States imperialism, dominate most of the countries. The past two years have witnessed a number of important strikes in Brazil, Cuba, Uruguay, Chile, and elsewhere. The

trade-union movement in Chile is especially exhibiting renewed vitality, after several years of drastic repression. It has acquired a new unity and generally has increased its strength and its political position in the country. The Fourth Congress of the Latin-American Confederation of Labor (C.T.A.L.), held in Chile, in March, 1953, strengthened the upswing of the trade-union movement generally in Latin America. Present were delegates and observers representing 225 unions in 12 countries—Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Cuba, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Chile. (*Latin American Facts*, May 1953.) The desperate efforts of the United States, with the help of the national dictators and the A. F. of L.-C.I.O. leadership to destroy the C.T.A.L., have failed dramatically.

THE QUESTION OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

There is an obvious need for a much closer collaboration between the developing national-liberation movement in Latin America and the labor and progressive movement in the United States. Each has much to contribute to the other. Victories for the workers and their allies South of the Rio Grande are vastly significant to the working class and its allies North of that line, and so are their defeats. During the last few years hemispheric cooperation—economic, political, cultural—has

fallen very much into abeyance, and its re-development is a task of major importance.

One of the first necessities in this general respect is for the Left and progressive movement in the United States to get better acquainted with what is taking place in the Latin-American countries, and then to make this information known far and wide among the masses. Here the Marxist press has the definite duty to act as the vanguard; to set an example for the labor and progressive forces as a whole. As Lenin stressed, it is the political responsibility of the labor movements in the imperialist countries to give the most active cooperation to the colonial and semi-colonial peoples under the oppression and domination of their national bourgeoisie; but this is an obligation that the Communist Party of the United States has but little fulfilled relative to the peoples of Latin America, especially that of Puerto Rico.

The time was, a dozen or more years ago, when there was hardly an issue of *The Communist*, without its containing one or more important articles on Latin America, written either by Latin-American leaders or by United States Communists; but now articles of this type are far between in our press. Organizational contacts through congresses, delegations, etc., have been similarly neglected. These weaknesses can and must be overcome. Latin America is full of developments vital to the progressive forces of this country and it is our bounden task to make them

widely known among the masses here. This also implies a much closer collaboration with the Latin-American Communist parties than now exists. The McCarrans and their like appreciate the enormous importance of such Communist international cooperation; hence their persistent attempts to isolate these parties from each other by drastic passport restrictions.

There is a great need, too, for closer cooperation of the trade unions on a hemisphere basis. In the years when the C.I.O. had a progressive leadership, up to the beginning of the "cold war," it maintained close relations with the C.T.A.L. and with the struggles of the Latin-American labor movement. This collaboration was of great benefit to the workers in all parts of the hemisphere. But now the C.I.O. leaders, under instruction of the State Department, have not only severed these healthful connections, but they actually have tried to destroy the C.T.A.L. by launching a dual organization. Despite this treachery, however, the rank-and-file workers in the United States have a strong common interest with those in Latin America, and they will respond to this interest, if given leadership in the matter. To bring about fraternal cooperation between the A. F. of L., C.I.O., and independent unions in this country, and the C.T.A.L. and other groups in Latin America is a task that is decisive for the progress of organized labor as a whole in the western hemisphere.

There is a general need also for a far closer cooperation between the organized peace forces of Latin America and those of the United States. This collaboration we also have greatly neglected. The peoples of Latin America, in the main, are fundamentally dedicated to the preservation of world peace. On the basis of their long and bitter experience with ruthless Yankee imperialism, they are little fooled by the false assertions of Wall Street that it is creating a great international war machine and covering the world with its air bases, all for the purpose of conserving world peace and democracy. Closer cooperation of the peace forces on a hemisphere scale would mean a great strengthening of the peace movement everywhere else.

The perspective is definitely for a further stepping up of the national liberation and peace movements of Latin America. This is already taking place in political unison with the intensification of the great mass movements in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and among the toiling masses of Europe. It will be further speeded, too, by the weakening of the U.S.-led anti-Soviet war alliance, as indicated by the more independent position being taken by Great Britain, India, Canada, and other countries in the United Nations. Our Party must realize what is happening in Latin America and fall into step with the vital mass movement which is there taking shape.